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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

State Department review completed

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30 November 1968

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No. 0327/68
30 November 1968

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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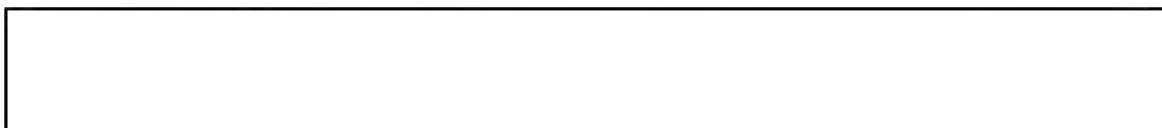
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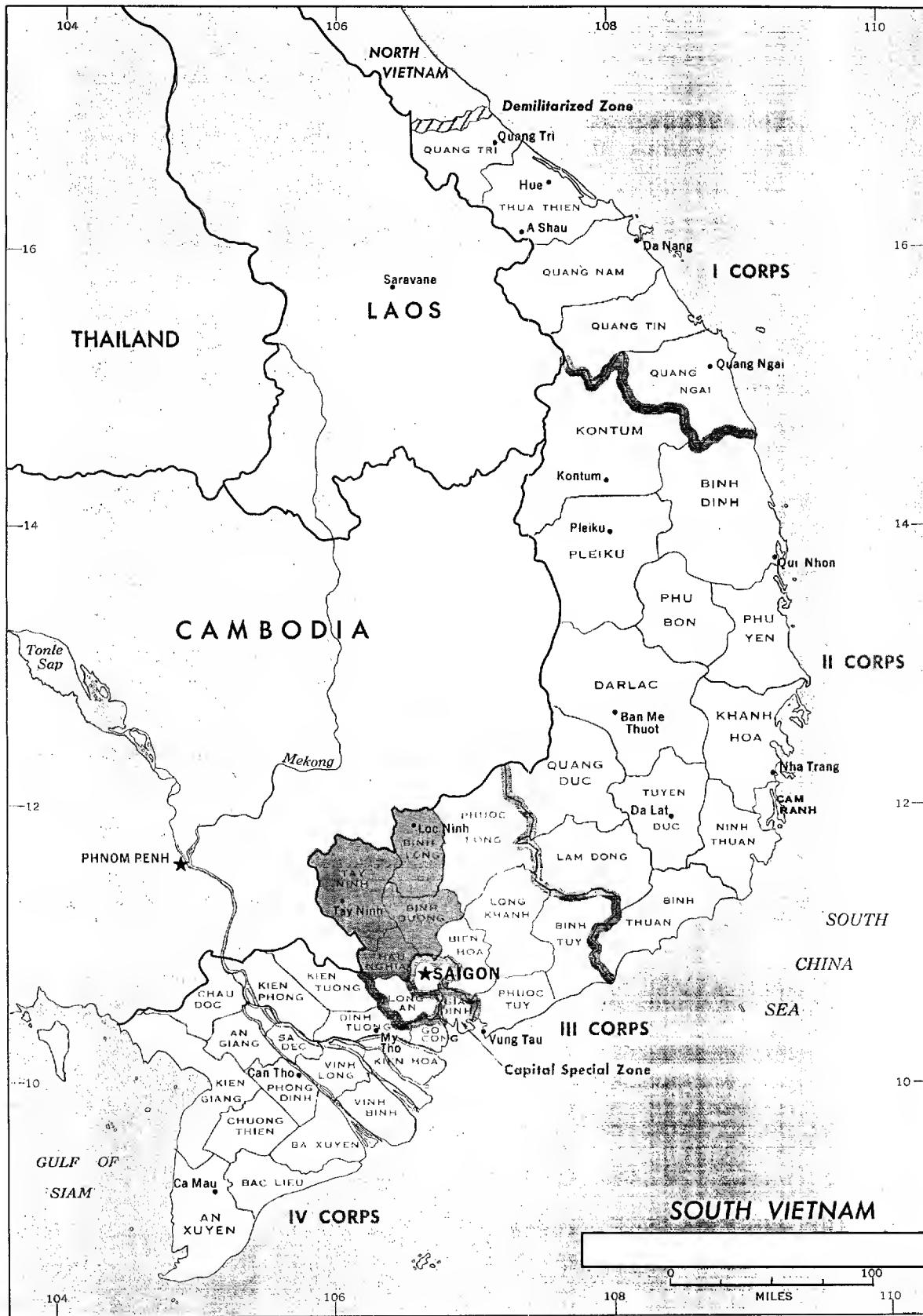
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[South Vietnam: Heavy fighting is continuing in the provinces north and northwest of Saigon as allied forces grapple with dug-in Communist units. Enemy forces have taken heavy casualties in this series of clashes.

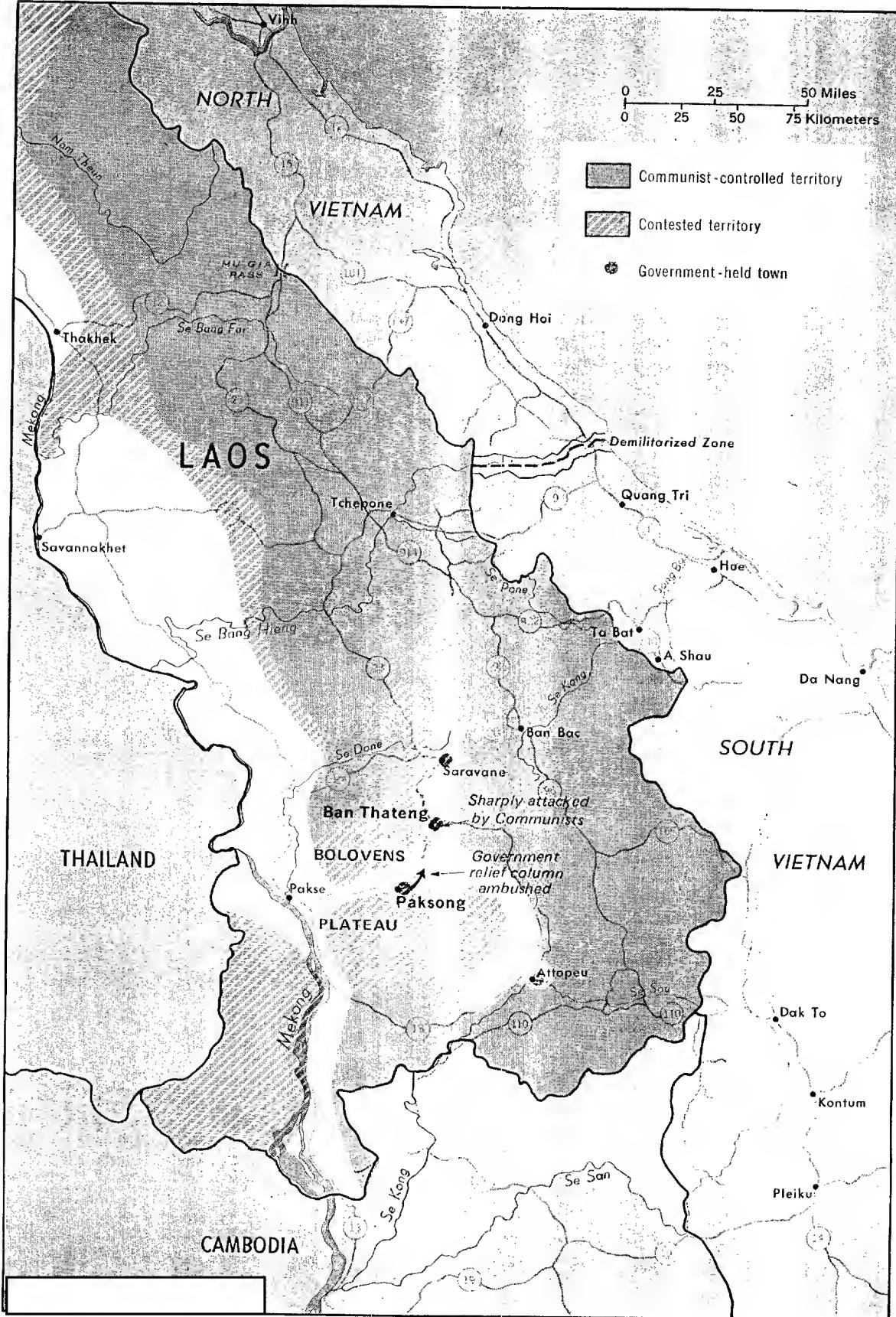
South Vietnamese forces reported a 40-round mortar attack on 28 November from an enemy position believed to be in the southern half of the Demilitarized Zone. Military action was generally light throughout the rest of the country. []

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Laos: Communists Launch Offensive In Bolovens Area



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Laos: The Communists appear to have begun their annual dry season offensive in the Bolovens Plateau area.

North Vietnamese troops have launched several sharp attacks against the government base at Ban Thateng over the past several days. The defenders have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy but fighting was continuing at last report. A small government relief column on its way to the beleaguered outpost from Paksong was routed in a Communist ambush.

The attack against Ban Thateng is the most significant enemy action in the Bolovens Plateau area since last February, when the enemy moved into the Se Done valley and surrounded the provincial capitals of Saravane and Attapeu. The North Vietnamese may be picking up where they left off then, with the Ban Thateng thrust the initial step in a new effort to push government forces from the eastern rim of the plateau. The attack could, however, be no more than a reaction to a recent sweep operation designed to clear enemy forces east of Ban Thateng and extend the government's presence into the infiltration corridor.

The North Vietnamese have enough troops in the area to take the Bolovens Plateau and the provincial capitals of Attapeu and Saravane if they choose to do so. The tactical situation was essentially the same last year, however, and the provincial capitals are still in friendly hands. [redacted]

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Communist China: Recent Chinese moves have reflected a more flexible and conventional approach to foreign affairs in Peking.

China's acceptance of the US proposal to resume ambassadorial talks in Warsaw next February appears to have been prompted by its desire to establish contacts with the incoming US administration and to assume a more forthcoming international posture. Peking had refused earlier to hold a scheduled November session of the talks. In accepting the February date, however, the Chinese denied having opposed the November meeting and accused the US of seeking to delay the talks until the new administration takes office in Washington.

Peking's public announcement of its willingness to meet with the US also probably reflects a softening of the Chinese position on Vietnam negotiations. Peking's heavy-handed criticism of Hanoi's decision to talk with the US had been a major factor in its reluctance to hold a Warsaw session for over a year.

In another possible indication of Peking's desire to assume a more active foreign role, Chief of Staff Huang Yung-sheng arrived in Albania on 26 November for a two-week visit. Huang is the first member of the top Chinese elite to visit a foreign country since June 1967. Other ranking Chinese leaders have been sitting on a number of state invitations, and Huang's visit could possibly signal a revival of Chinese "personal diplomacy"--once an important element of Chinese foreign policy. [redacted]

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Communist China: Some steps may be under way to carry out Mao's radical policies to reduce material incentives in agriculture.

The most detailed account of changes is contained in a 12-point plan recently presented to one commune. This calls for a more egalitarian system of labor payments, for the reduction of private plots, and for re-assignment of most administrative personnel to "laboring" posts in order to increase their ideological worthiness. Provincial radio stations have recently praised communes that have merged basic units and collectivized privately owned pigs.

With food supplies precariously balanced against need, however, it is unlikely that there will be a sudden and sweeping change in agricultural incentive systems. Up to now, the leadership, while accepting heavy economic costs, has demonstrated an awareness of the consequences of its actions. Some changes may be tried out, but the importance of food production probably will continue to inhibit the achievement of ideological purity in agricultural policies.

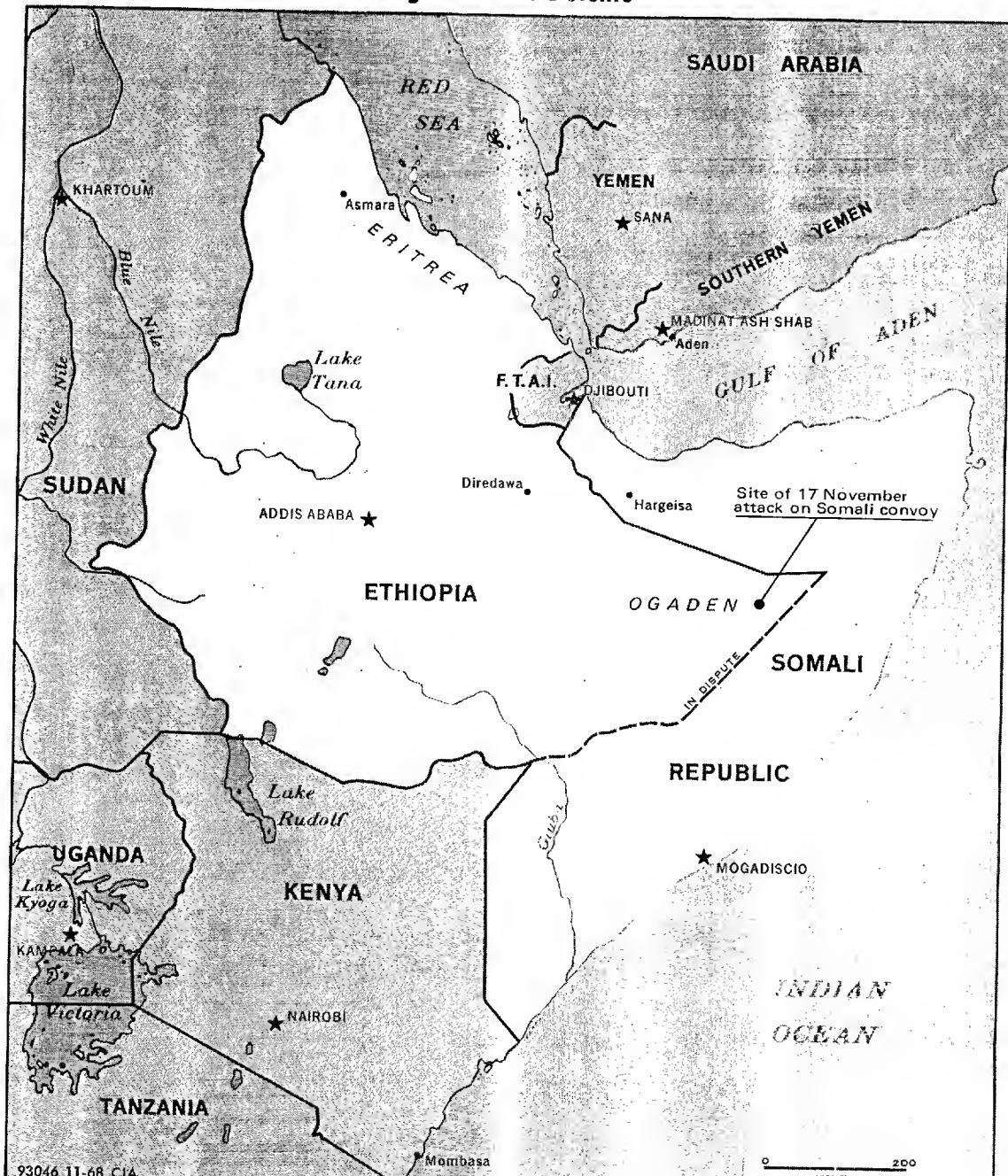
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ETHIOPIA/SOMALIA: Incident in Ogaden Mars Detente



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Somali Republic - Ethiopia: Moderate Somali Prime Minister Egal is under attack by his political opponents because of renewed Ethiopian harassment of Somalis in eastern Ethiopia.

Several Somalis were killed on 17 November during an attack by Ethiopian troops. The Somalis were members of a convoy of civilians who were crossing Ethiopia under the provisions of a far-reaching detente negotiated by top Ethiopian and Somali leaders in early September. [redacted] this is only one of several incidents of renewed harassment of Somalis by the Ethiopian Army in the long-troubled Ogaden region.

Egal, the major architect of the detente policy, is in the midst of a parliamentary election campaign and is concerned over the political advantage that his opponents can gain by exploiting such incidents because of a basic Somali distrust of Ethiopia. The prime minister will probably press the Ethiopians to uphold their end of the September agreements by restraining their local commanders.

These latest incidents in the Ogaden point up the vulnerability of the detente to irresponsible actions by certain elements in the military of both countries.

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Rumania-USSR: Rumanian leader Ceausescu has formulated a firm position in preparation for upcoming bloc meetings.

In two recent speeches, he stoutly defended Rumania's policies toward the bloc's Council for Economic Mutual Assistance (CEMA) and the Warsaw Pact. Ceausescu said that Rumania cannot go along with proposals to give CEMA "suprastate prerogatives" and create "certain supranational economic bodies."

He also seemed to be lecturing his Warsaw Pact allies when he said that Rumania understands its responsibilities and duties under the pact, even as he implicitly rejected recent Soviet pronouncements limiting the rights of members of the "socialist community." This "thesis," he declared, "does not correspond to the principles of the relations among the socialist countries and cannot be accepted under any form whatsoever."

Ceausescu's remarks are characteristic of his style of leadership. He may have considered it necessary to be so firm in preparation for the forthcoming CEMA summit meeting. An additional reason may have been Ceausescu's desire to condition the Rumanian public to go along with concessions his government reportedly has made, notably to permit combined pact maneuvers on Rumanian soil in 1969. Ceausescu, however, avoided comment on Moscow's call for Bucharest to disassociate itself from any NATO "umbrella" over Rumania and Yugoslavia. [redacted]

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Argentina: The Onganía government is having second thoughts about purchasing the French Mirage interceptor.

In a speech on 26 November, the defense minister indicated that for the present Argentina would not purchase the 12 Mirage III aircraft for which it has been negotiating several months. Air force leaders had assumed the decision to buy the Mirage was firm, and were shocked by the statement. [redacted]

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The government has publicized its intention to purchase most of its arms in Europe, but a slippage in deliveries of French tanks has given military leaders reason to believe that switching to European suppliers might create unexpected problems.

Argentina apparently is still committed to supersonic interceptors as part of its re-equipment program, but the deferral of the Mirage may be designed to allow the US to make a new offer of the F-5.

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Colombia: The second major political crisis in six months is threatening the National Front system of government.

On 29 November, President Lleras' entire cabinet resigned at his request. The President announced at the same time that he will reorganize the government because the Liberal-Conservative coalition, which has maintained stability in Colombia for the past decade, could not effect the constitutional reforms and other legislation he considers necessary. All governors and officials of the presidential palace have also resigned.

The present crisis was triggered by proposed legislation that the Conservative Party believes would ensure a Liberal majority in the congress of 1974, when the agreement that created the National Front is due to expire. Under the National Front system, the presidency has alternated between the Liberals and the Conservatives every four years.

Lleras' political tactics in recent months have been counterproductive, and this head-on clash seems no more likely to solve the mounting political problems than did his threatened resignation last June.

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Cambodia: The imminent completion of a refinery at Sihanoukville will virtually eliminate Cambodia's dependence on the Mekong River for imports of its petroleum products. The refinery's production probably will meet Cambodia's normal requirements during the second quarter of next year, and rail service from Sihanoukville to Phnom Penh is scheduled to begin at the same time. Both developments will reduce the pressure that South Vietnam can exert on Phnom Penh by closing the Mekong to shipping destined for Cambodia.

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UN-Korea: The General Assembly's First Political Committee has passed a US-backed resolution that expresses willingness to invite North Korea to participate, along with South Korea, in the UN debate of Korean affairs, provided North Korea accepts UN jurisdiction over Korean matters. The committee's vote was 67 to 28 with 28 abstentions. Earlier, the Soviet-led bid to invite North Korea without strings attached failed by a vote of 40 to 55 with 28 abstentions, a slightly greater margin of defeat than a similar move suffered last year. The motion failed despite new tactical moves and increased diplomatic pressures by the Soviets and their allies. On 11 December, the committee will begin substantive discussions of the Korean question, but a North Korean delegation is not likely to appear.

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Mexico: Divisions among student leaders could provoke further violence. On 27 November, one student was killed and two others seriously wounded in Mexico City during an attack by extremists against students who had returned to class. Attendance at the National University has increased during the week despite hard-line attempts to continue the strike. There has been widespread criticism of the violence, and officials at the National University have asked for protection for those who return to class.

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